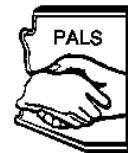




Parent Information Network



The Second Time Around: Grandparents Raising Their Grandchildren

The pitter-patter of little feet or the challenge of raising an adolescent or teenager, on a full time basis, is not what most parents thought they would face as they reached their 50s and 60s and became grandparents.

3.9 million children live with grandparents

Recent figures for the United States indicate that there are more than 3.9 million children living with their grandparents who are their primary caregivers or legal guardians.

More and more parents are not able to cope with parenting their children. Loss of a job, drug or alcohol abuse, emotional or mental problems, incarceration, or immaturity may be contributing factors. As a result, many grandparents are stepping in to provide homes for their grandchildren. Some do so at considerable expense and hardship especially when a grandchild is a special needs child, one who has a disability or one who may not be bonded with anyone.

Issues of abandonment and bonding

Whether the absence of the parents can be explained by death, substance abuse, or the inability to cope, the children left behind may feel a sense of abandonment by their parents. This sense of abandonment sometimes results in a loss of self-esteem, academic problems, and/or difficulties with relationships. When a child who has been abandoned also has a disability or has not bonded, the problems are multiplied for the caretakers.

Bonding is the attachment of a child to a significant adult who will be there for them. The lack of bonding may result in a child having severe behavior problems and turning against themselves and the very people who seek to

love and provide for them. The lack of trust in adults, the lack of remorse for misconduct, and the lack of a conscience are all symptoms of an unbonded child. Competent, professional help is needed to help such a child.

Children with disabilities

Other children who do not have bonding issues, but have a disability, may be helped by special education services in school as well as by various community services. Special education is the modification or adaptation of materials, techniques, curriculum, or environment that will allow a child with a disability to benefit from his/her educational program. Disability-specific support groups are available for families who have members diagnosed with conditions such as autism, learning disabilities, hearing, vision or health impairments, or developmental disabilities. These support groups can be helpful in locating information or services for children and for providing emotional support to caregivers.

Training available in Special Education

Parent Information Network (PIN) Specialists affiliated with the Arizona Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services (ADE/ESS), offer printed and electronic information on disabilities, and free classes related to special education. Classes are available in every county.

Participation in the Special Education Process, consists of: an introduction to the referral and evaluation process, how a child is tested for a disability, how eligibility for special education services is determined, and the rights entitled to the parents or guardians. Handouts provide additional information on the acronyms and terminology commonly used in Special Education.

Participation in the Individualized Education Program (IEP), provides an overview of the purpose of the IEP, who may participate in the IEP meeting, how to prepare for and participate in the IEP process, what to do when you disagree with the proposed program for the student, and how to track progress in the child's program.

Parents as Advocates for Students, provides parents and caregivers the in-depth knowledge of special education needed to effectively advocate for a child in the educational system. The training includes information on students learning how to be self-advocates.

Additional classes are available on behaviors, communications, social skills, and the several transition stages a child encounters in school.

Contact Rita Kenison, Parent Information Network Coordinator, at the ADE/ESS, 602-364-4015, or toll free 800-352-4558, to obtain printed or electronic information on children's disabilities, audio or video tapes on parents' rights and responsibilities, or to inquire about attending one or more of the special education training classes described above. You may also visit the web site for the Parent Information Network www.ade.state.az.us/ess/pinspals. Contact information for the regional PIN Specialists and many of the free PIN Clearinghouse documents can be found at the web site.

More resources

Additional resources which may be of help to grandparents are: a resource notebook available from the Pima County Cooperative Extension (PCCE); and *Grandparents as Parents: A Survival Guide for Raising a Second Family*, by Sylvie De Toledo and Deborah Edler Brown.

The resource notebook was compiled with funds from various community sources, in cooperation with the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Southern Arizona Coalition. The notebook includes information on community services, support groups, legal issues, financial concerns, health insurance, children with special needs, child development and parent tips, nutrition, and links to other information sites. Write PCCE at 4210 N. Campbell, Tucson, AZ 85719, or call 520-626-5161. You may also visit the web site at cals.Arizona.edu/grandparents.

Grandparents as Parents is available at most public libraries in Arizona or through a local bookstore. In addition to providing information on guardianships and custody issues, it also deals with everyday concerns such as health care, financial resources, eligibility for programs, looking at and planning for the future, and the importance of networking with other grandparents. The book contains biographical references and an excellent index.

References

- Brown, D.E. & DeToledo, S. (1995). *Grandparents as parents: A survival guide for raising a second family*. NY: Guilford Publications.
- U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, special tabulation. *Census 2000 PHC-T-17: Multigenerational households for the United States and for Puerto Rico*. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau